(c) to (e) The State Government have since allowed students studying in the schools running in the name of NFE Centres in the State to appear in Board examinations for 5th and 8th classes.

(f) Does not arise in view of (b) above.

National strategy for school going girls

1413. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated a national strategy for school going girls of the country, particularly the girls from rural and tribal areas;

(b) if so, the salient features thereof; and

(c) by when Government would start implementing the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT[DR.(SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) to (c) A National scheme for girls education is presently being formulated and would be implemented as soon as it is finalized and approved.

Mid-day Meal Scheme in tribal and backward areas

1414. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Mid-day meal programme is being implemented in all the primary schools in backward and tribal areas;

(b) if so, the coverage of the programme in these areas;

(c) the efforts being made to strengthen this programme in these areas; and

(d) how far this programme has been successful in improving drop-out rates in these areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education commonly known as Mid-day Meal Scheme aims to cover all students in classes I—V in Government, Govemment-aided and local body schools including schools in

backward and tribal areas. At present Gujarat, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry are providing cooked meals. 89 tribal blocks of Madhya Pradesh and 85 tribal blocks in Chhattisgarh are also providing cooked meals to children. In Orissa, cooked meal are being provided in 8 KBK districts and 74 ITDA blocks of the non-KBK districts. Recently Karnataka has introudced a cooked meals in 7 educationally backward districts of the State. Ready-to-eat food is being distributed in Delhi. The remaining States/UTs are distributing foodgrains (wheat/rice).

(c) The Government has taken steps to improve the monitoring and supervision of the programme at all levels, create a greater awareness regarding the programme through involvement of Village Education Committees, streamline procedures so as to ensure regular supply of foodgrains and timely reimbursement of transportation charges and payment to Food Corporation of India and ensure a more rigorous role for the nodal agency for programme implementation at the State level.

In order to have a continuous assessment of implementation of the programme, Chief Secretaries of States and Administrators of UTs have been requested to arrange surprise checks of Primary Schools. Similarly, officers of the departments of Elementary Education and Literacy and Secondary & Higher Education have also been requested to undertake surprise checks during their visits to States/UTs.

(d) An evaluation has been undertaken in 10 States to asses the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme by an independent agency, Operations Research Group, New Delhi. The study covers Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The report was submitted in September, 1999. The findings of the report state that while the programme has given a boost to enrolment in Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal; in 6 other States it has a positive impact on attendance and retention.

Besides, a study conducted by NCERT on State Policies in Incentive Schemes in Primary Schools and their Contribution to Girls' participation, completed in April 2000, also covers the Mid-day Meal Scheme in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The report says that the Noon Meal Scheme of Tamil Nadu and supply of foodgrains under MDM in Uttar Pradesh have helped in improve the enrolment and retention of girls in schools.